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Input from the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum on sustainable development

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat hereby transmits the input from the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development to the high-level political forum on sustainable development, as agreed at the third session of the Asia-Pacific Forum, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific in Bangkok from 3 to 5 April 2016.

Report of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development on its third session

[Original: Chinese, English, French and Russian]

Summary

The Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development held its third session from 3 to 5 April 2016. The Forum discussed regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, with a particular focus on social vulnerabilities and the role that data and tools can take to support sustainable development; addressed the role and conditions for scientific and technological innovation for sustainable development; and drew attention to urban centres and the role of local leaders and citizen engagement.

As mandated by its second session in 2015, the Forum agreed on the core elements for a regional road map and proposed the following form, function and modalities of the Forum: (a) supporting countries, in particular countries with special needs, including through enhancing their capacity for implementation of the 2030 Agenda; (b) providing a regional perspective on the implementation of the sustainable development agenda by identifying regional trends, and consolidating and sharing best practices and lessons learned; and (c) supporting follow-up and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level.

1. The third session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, organized by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP), was held in Bangkok from 3 to 5 April 2016.

2. It was attended by more than 420 participants, including representatives of Governments, civil society organizations, United Nations bodies and other international organizations, and other entities.

3. The meeting was attended by representatives of the following ESCAP members: Afghanistan; Armenia; Australia; Azerbaijan; Bangladesh; Bhutan; Cambodia; China; Democratic People's Republic of Korea; Fiji; India; Indonesia; Iran (Islamic Republic of); Japan; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Lao People's Democratic Republic; Malaysia; Maldives; Mongolia; Myanmar; Nepal; Pakistan; Philippines; Republic of Korea; Russian Federation; Samoa; Sri Lanka; Tajikistan; Thailand; Timor-Leste; Tonga; Tuvalu; United States of America; Uzbekistan; and Viet Nam. A representative of one non-member State (Switzerland) attended as observer.

4. Statements on the outcome of the second session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and on Asian and Pacific perspectives on the global process were made by its Chair, Mr. Siaosi 'Ofakivahafolau Sovaleni, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Environment, Tonga.

5. A welcome statement was made by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP.

6. Mr. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Thailand, delivered a statement for Thailand.

7. Statements were delivered by Ms. Mai Naomi Thang and Mr. Sanjeet Aggarwal, youth representatives, on the perspectives of youth, and Mr. Hironori Hamanaka, Chair, Board of Directors, Institute for Global Environmental Strategies.

8. The Forum elected the following Bureau members:

(a) Chair:

Mr. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera (Sri Lanka)

(b) Vice-Chairs:

Mr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada (Nepal)
Mr. Ahsan Iqbal (Pakistan)
Mr. Battsereg Namdag (Mongolia)
Mr. Emmanuel F. Esguerra (Philippines)
Mr. Pichet Durongkaveroj (Thailand)
Mr. Constâncio da Conceição Pinto (Timor-Leste)
Mr. S.B. Dissanayake (Sri Lanka)

(c) Rapporteur:

Mr. Tuon Thavrak (Cambodia)

9. The meeting adopted the following agenda:

1. Opening of the session.

2. Election of officers.

3. Adoption of the agenda.

4. Regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific.

5. Regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the form and function of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development and its follow-up and review process.

6. Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

7. Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable: regional priorities and opportunities.

8. Other matters.

9. Review and adoption of the draft report of the Forum.

10. Closing of the session.

10. The present report was adopted on 5 April 2016 by the Forum. The Chair's summary on regional priorities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific is contained in the annex.

11. The Forum was informed of the discussions of the preparatory meeting of senior officials on the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and the form and function of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development, which was held on 2 April 2016.

12. The Forum was further informed of the outcomes of the Asia-Pacific Civil Society Forum on Sustainable Development, which was organized by ESCAP, in collaboration with the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development and other civil society organizations on behalf of the Asia Pacific Regional CSO Engagement Mechanism as well as the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and held in Bangkok from 31 March to 2 April 2016.

13. Associated events were held on voluntary national reviews as well as on Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 10.

14. A special event entitled "Global Partnership on Sustainable Development Data" was held. Side events entitled "Building Knowledge Partnerships: Academia and UN System Knowledge Platforms for Advancing the SDGs"; "Achieving Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment: Transforming Economies, Realizing the 2030 Agenda"; and "Are we ready to build inclusive and engaging societies?" were held. The joint report of ESCAP, the United Nations Environment Programme, the United Nations University and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies entitled *Transformations for Sustainable Development: Promoting Environmental Sustainability in Asia and the Pacific* was launched.

15. In accordance with the agreement reached at the second session of the Forum in 2015 that the form, function and modalities of the Forum should be decided at its third session through an intergovernmental consultative process, member States recommended the following:

(a) Bearing in mind that the form, functions and modalities of the Forum should be guided by decisions taken at the high-level political forum on sustainable development and should not prejudge those decisions, and, taking into account budgetary implications yet to be decided by member States, must not increase the

reporting burdens of the member States nor the budget and operating costs of ESCAP, the Forum may serve as a regional platform for:

(i) Supporting countries, in particular countries with special needs, including through enhancing their capacity for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

(ii) Providing a regional perspective on the implementation of the sustainable development agenda by identifying regional trends, and consolidating and sharing best practices and lessons learned, taking into account the contributions of other United Nations system bodies at the regional level, other regional and subregional organizations and relevant stakeholders;

(iii) Supporting follow-up and review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals at the regional level. Detailed implementation arrangements will be decided after agreement in the General Assembly and will be further discussed;

(b) The Forum may be convened annually as an inclusive intergovernmental forum preparatory to the high-level political forum and the theme of the Forum should be consistent with that of the high-level political forum;

(c) The current format, including the election of the bureau and co-chairs for the session could be maintained, including providing a space for multi-stakeholder engagement for implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in consultation as appropriate with member States;

(d) The outcome of the Forum will be in the form of a report with an annexed chair's summary;

(e) As an inclusive intergovernmental platform that is part of the conference structure of ESCAP, the Forum:

(i) Could have its formal report presented by the chair or rapporteur of the Forum to the Commission, with an annexed chair's summary;

(ii) Could receive inputs from ESCAP committees and other relevant stakeholders;

(iii) Shall benefit from the Advisory Committee of Permanent Representatives of ESCAP as a modality for consulting Governments between sessions;

(f) Preparatory meetings of stakeholders may be convened, within existing resources;

(g) The procedural aspects of the Forum could be generally guided by the following:

(i) The Forum, including stakeholder engagement, will follow the rules of procedure of the Commission as well as the modalities of the high-level political forum under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council as long as there is no conflict between them;

(ii) During each session, a member of the bureau of the previous session could report on the discussions at the intervening high-level political forum and on the conclusions of the previous session of the Forum;

(h) The conduct of the Forum must avoid duplication with other regional forums and platforms. In the interest of efficiency, where appropriate, it is proposed that the Forum be convened in coordination or collaboration with other forums and platforms;

(i) The form, function and modalities of the Forum will be modified/decided upon in 2016 and 2017 taking into account the inputs from the high-level political forum on sustainable development regarding the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and then periodically by member States, and adjusted as appropriate.

16. In accordance with the agreement reached at the second session of the Forum in 2015 that the third session should initiate the process to develop a regional road map for implementation of the 2030 Agenda, member States suggested developing a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific and identified the following points as the foundation for the development and implementation of the road map.

A. Objectives and scope of the road map

(a) This road map is for members and associate members of ESCAP to cooperate at the regional level, guided by all the principles reaffirmed and agreed to in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific, as provided for by the General Assembly in its resolution 70/1 and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development;

(b) The road map will give particular emphasis on supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by the developing countries, in particular, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, small island developing States and other countries with special needs, while maintaining the universality of the 2030 Agenda and taking into account different national realities, capacities and levels of development and respect for policy space and priorities while remaining consistent with relevant international rules and commitments, and creating no additional reporting requirements for Governments;

(c) Member States are expected to identify priority areas of cooperation and implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific, with particular emphasis on the practical means of implementation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals;

(d) Member States noted the support by the secretariat, within its existing resources and mandates, to:

(i) Facilitate discussions among member States in the lead-up to its session in 2017, by leveraging the conference structure of ESCAP and making full use of planned meetings for 2016 and 2017, including the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, as well as expert group meetings and other existing meetings and activities planned under the Commission's programme of work for 2016-2017;

(ii) Promote multi-stakeholder engagement by facilitating inputs and views from various stakeholders as appropriate;

(iii) Mobilize support from, among other sources, the agencies, funds and programmes of the United Nations by leveraging the Asia-Pacific Regional Coordination Mechanism;

(iv) Undertake a needs assessment and gap analysis.

B. Timeline and milestones

(a) Member States intend to continue consultations to define priority areas, based on the following tentative timeline, which should be consistent and synergetic with the global debate on implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development:

2016-2017: stocktaking

- A needs assessment and gap analysis will be conducted by the secretariat in consultation with member States where necessary.

2018-2030: implementation

- The areas of cooperation that have been identified will be implemented;

(b) Member States may continue consultations and discussions regarding any possible specific areas for cooperation for implementation of the road map, as appropriate;

(c) Member States may revise the above timeline and set of milestones as appropriate at any given time as part of the process of assessment and update of the road map.

17. The Forum concluded that the present report, including its annex, should be brought to the attention of the Commission at its seventy-second session, to be held from 15 to 19 May 2016, and to the global dialogues on sustainable development, including in particular, the fourth session of the high-level political forum convening under the auspices of the Economic and Social Council from 11 to 15 July 2016 at United Nations Headquarters with the theme "Ensuring that no one is left behind".

Annex

Chair's summary of discussions at the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development 2016

1. The third session of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development was the first regional meeting held after the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015, both in the Asia-Pacific region and the other regions, and has contributed to shaping the regional response to the 2030 Agenda. During the three-day meeting, participants discussed priorities for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific. The Forum addressed the topic of social vulnerabilities and highlighted the importance of data and the need for systematic analysis of the Sustainable Development Goals. It addressed how science, technology and innovation can be used to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development, as well as the significance of building inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities in the region. As mandated by the second session of the Forum, proposals regarding the form, function and modalities of the Forum were presented; member States made recommendations in that regard. The process to develop a regional road map was initiated and the foundations of a road map have been identified.

I. Session 1. Regional priorities for implementation: overview

2. In session 1, participants initiated a regional dialogue on priorities for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific and presented a preliminary assessment of the status of implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Participants explored regional megatrends impacting the needs and abilities of individual countries, as well as their development outcomes, and highlighted priorities for regional action to support national Governments.

3. The session was chaired by Mr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada, Vice-Chair, National Planning Commission, Nepal, and moderated by Mr. Jonas Leones, Undersecretary for Environment and International Environmental Affairs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines. Panellists in the session included Mr. Battsereg Namdag, Minister of Environment, Green Development and Tourism, Mongolia; Mr. Gamini Jayawickrama Perera, Minister of Sustainable Development and Wildlife, Sri Lanka; Mr. Constâncio da Conceição Pinto, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Environment, Timor-Leste; Mr. Ilyosiddin Kamolitdinov, Deputy Minister of Economy, Tajikistan; and Mr. Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Member of Parliament and President of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

4. Following the introduction to the session by the Chair, the Executive Secretary opened the session by reflecting on megatrends affecting the region and outlining priority areas for the secretariat's support to member States to ensure that the region shifted to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the shortest possible time frame.

5. The moderator further highlighted economic, social and environmental megatrends in the Philippines. While challenging, he noted that such trends also provided opportunities, including through the reformulation of policies and the forging of new partnerships. Panellists reflected on regional megatrends and also

identified national- and subnational-specific trends, including vulnerability to natural disasters, isolation from markets, clean energy, food security and youthful populations. Speakers highlighted the need for immediate national responses based on national ownership and policy coherence with the 2030 Agenda, while underlining that the tasks ahead in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals would need strengthened regional cooperation and greater capacity development, technical assistance and financial support.

6. Member States highlighted current challenges to the realization of sustainable development as well as the need to move away from the inefficient use of natural resources and address environmental degradation; to effectively harness economic growth to eradicate poverty; to invest in social policy, especially through comprehensive social protection policies, with a focus on youth; to address gaps in finance and capacity; to ensure access to water, food, education and energy for all; and to address the threats posed by climate change and natural disasters. It was recognized that a regional, concerted and effective response should be made to ensure that no one was left behind in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda. While the 2030 Agenda was noted as ambitious, delegations highlighted that it also provided an opportunity to shift away from "business as usual" and to more effectively address the complex and multisectoral challenges. More holistic approaches that integrated the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development were seen as indispensable to the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

7. Member States noted that the 2030 Agenda was complementary to national priorities and visions, though its scope meant that some countries would need to prioritize in certain areas. Member States further shared initiatives already in place or being developed to support implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Some member States had adopted the Sustainable Development Goals as part of national development plans and incorporated them into national legislation. National institutional set-ups were being established, including those led by Heads of State, as well as by national secretariats, while engaging subnational governments and civil society. The 2030 Agenda was seen as highly compatible with national development philosophies and goals, but participants noted that more needed to be done to link the Sustainable Development Goals with specific programmes and strategies.

8. Member States emphasized that regional processes should be aligned with national and global priorities and commitments defined at the high-level political forum on sustainable development, should be voluntary and locally defined, and should be clearly focused on socioeconomic issues as well as implementation. While there were specific national priorities and review modalities to be respected, regional cooperation was considered as essential for addressing national country priorities. Regional mechanisms could support implementation through capacity development, financing, strengthening capacity in statistics and data through advisory services, training and technical assistance, South-South exchange and strengthening economic cooperation.

9. Civil society organizations called for regional action to ensure that member States' commitments to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals would be realized, including adherence to human rights, ensuring social protection, providing universal access to health and education,

shifting to sustainable agriculture to end hunger, ending all forms of marginalization and discrimination, and institutionalized participation based on the principles set at the high-level political forum on sustainable development.

II. Session 2. Regional priorities for implementation: statistics and mainstreaming of the Sustainable Development Goals to address vulnerability

10. This session focused on social vulnerabilities faced by the region and the role of integrated analysis to identify priorities in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals in national contexts, as well as the importance of high-quality disaggregated data and statistics to support rigorous and evidence-based follow-up and review.

11. The session was chaired by Mr. Ahsan Iqbal, Minister of Planning, Development and Reform, Pakistan, who also moderated a panel discussion consisting of Mr. Yuba Raj Khatiwada, Vice-Chair, National Planning Commission, Nepal; Mr. Emmanuel F. Esguerra, Secretary, Socioeconomic Planning, Philippines; Mr. Sonam Wangchuk, Secretary, Gross National Happiness Commission, Bhutan; Mr. Sefuiva Reupena Muagututia, Government Statistician, Samoa Bureau of Statistics, Samoa; Mr. Panmao Zhai, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, working group 1 Co-Chair; Mr. Santosh Mehrotra, Professor of Economics, Centre for Informal Sector and Labour Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, India.

12. The Forum emphasized that the successful implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals should not result in islands of prosperity and islands of poverty, but should rather bridge various communities by addressing vulnerabilities. Vulnerable groups included women, indigenous peoples, older persons, persons with disabilities, migrants, agricultural workers, youth and informal sector workers, as they are without social protection. It was noted that developing countries in Asia and the Pacific, in particular least developed countries and small island developing States, were also vulnerable to the impact of climate change and natural disasters, such as sea level rise, cyclones, landslides, flooding and drought. In this regard, the panel called for a holistic approach to sustainable development that addressed the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 and the Paris Agreement. In this connection, the Forum recommended that a regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda must address these vulnerabilities.

13. The Forum highlighted the need to adapt the global Sustainable Development Goal indicators to the specific conditions of each country and that national and regional review processes could help to focus policies to allocate resources and identify areas where assistance was needed. The Forum noted that review processes should complement existing processes and that outcomes of regional and national reviews could provide feedback and support advocacy for the political commitment to achieve the Goals, as well as provide an opportunity for learning and sharing of best practices.

14. The Forum noted the importance of high-quality, timely, accessible, reliable, relevant data and statistics disaggregated by income, sex, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability and geographical location and other characteristics

relevant to national context. The Forum highlighted that data was needed for evidence-based interventions. In particular, a statistical framework that captured vulnerabilities was needed to direct resources towards addressing inequalities.

15. Recognizing the gaps in data availability, the quality required for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the constraints in national statistical capacity, the Forum highlighted that a data revolution and transformative action, as well as a revision of data ecosystems and strong partnerships with development partners, were needed to respond to the need for data. In this connection, the Forum commended the leadership of the Committee on Statistics in enhancing capacity-building support to increase the availability of high-quality, timely, reliable data.

16. The Forum expressed support for developing multi-stakeholder platforms to enhance participation and accountability in the monitoring and review of progress. It further highlighted the need for supporting regional knowledge exchange for follow-up and review.

17. Civil society highlighted the need for the regional road map to incorporate indicators and disaggregation of the data most relevant to the region and emphasized the need for targeted and sustained action plans with allocated budgets, including data collection, analysis and reporting, to ensure the effective participation of marginalized groups in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

III. Session 3. Regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the form and function of the Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development

18. The second session of the Forum requested that the third session of the Forum, in 2016, initiate and define a regional road map and decide on the form, function and modalities of the Forum by means of an intergovernmental consultative process. Session 3 of the Forum discussed proposals in this regard.

19. The session was chaired by Mr. Constâncio da Conceição Pinto, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Environment, Timor-Leste. Mr. Jonas Leones, Undersecretary for Environment and International Environmental Affairs, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines, reported as Chair of the preparatory meeting of senior officials on the regional road map for implementing the 2030 Agenda in Asia and the Pacific and the form and function of the Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development, which was held on 2 April 2016. The preparatory meeting was attended by representatives of 28 ESCAP member States, one non-member State and representatives of civil society. The Chair reflected on the support for the Forum expressed at the preparatory meeting and shared an overview of the areas in which there had been a convergence of views with respect to the form and function of the Forum and the regional road map.

20. Statements by Governments acknowledged that while many decisions had yet to be taken at the global level, there was strong support for the Forum as a regional platform to facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

Development. Recognizing that there was a need for more discussion, the Forum convened an informal working group. The working group developed two documents, one on the form, function and modalities of the Forum and the other on a regional road map.

21. Following further review in the plenary, the first document on the form and function of the Forum, as an annual intergovernmental forum, received the support of participants. The second document constituted the foundation of a road map, on which further consultations towards its finalization have been requested. The conclusions of the working group addressed many of the shared aspirations for the Forum and for the regional road map, as reflected in many of the statements by member States and by civil society organizations. Those statements also provided many suggestions for further discussion and follow-up on the organization of future sessions of the Forum. It was noted that the Forum should be a part of the ESCAP conference structure.

22. It was proposed that following the third session of the Forum, a working committee/task group be established together with a process and clear provisions for defining the key priorities and pathways, stakeholder consultations and timelines for negotiations and agreements. Such a committee/task group should work towards building a regional sustainable development road map coherent with national sustainable development challenges, needs and aspirations and generate collective ownership and inspire partnerships for implementation.

23. Follow-up and review was also addressed through many statements. The role of the Forum and ESCAP in bringing the regional perspective to the global discussion was underlined. The work of the Secretariat of the Pacific Community to develop a draft set of Pacific regional headline indicators was noted. Other organizations, such as the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme, offered support for developing baseline data and other support relevant to follow-up and review, as well as the wider implementation of the agenda. The principle of common but differentiated responsibility in regional cooperation in relation to the 2030 Agenda was emphasized by some member States.

24. Governments shared their preparation and implementation efforts, both under existing efforts and future plans, and in relation to support to other countries. Those efforts included new institutions, including the first Ministry of Sustainable Development and Wildlife in Sri Lanka, a youth-focused national consultation in Azerbaijan and the incorporation of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development planning frameworks in several countries. Subregional organizations and United Nations entities also described the extensive support that was available to member States.

25. Civil society organizations called for involvement both in the Forum — as a multi-stakeholder, inclusive space for engagement, respecting the commitments made by the General Assembly in its resolution 67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the high-level political forum on sustainable development — and in the development and implementation of an ambitious regional road map. A time-bound and expeditious process of development and a Forum that created regional coherence was urged. In addition, a focus on new and emerging issues, particularly those requiring regional cooperation, was underlined as being of particular value. Private sector representatives proposed that the Forum

should reflect good practices in public-private partnership to inform regional norms, standards and policies.

26. Before the adoption of the draft report, one member State expressed concerns over possible financial implications and the last minute explanation provided in that regard. The member State pointed out that additional resource requirements can and should be managed within the resources available for the biennium 2016-2017 and reserved the right to express its views in the future.

27. The secretariat clarified that the Forum was not the platform to discuss budgetary matters. The secretariat further explained that budgetary matters are decided by the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly and, as instructed by the General Assembly, the United Nations Secretariat presented its budgetary requirements through a consolidated report to the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions for its review. That report will available for member States. The Commission will be informed in due course of the programme budgetary implications of the Forum.

IV. Session 4. Science, technology and innovation for sustainable development

28. Session 4 highlighted how science, technology and innovation could be used to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development. It emphasized that inclusive and collaborative approaches to innovation were critical to achieving the 2030 Agenda, and noted several key areas of focus, challenges and recommendations in that regard. The session noted that ESCAP and its Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation would be suitable platforms to share knowledge and facilitate collaboration on science, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

29. The session was chaired by Mr. Constâncio da Conceição Pinto, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Environment, Timor-Leste; and moderated by Mr. Ashvin Dayal, Managing Director, Asia, The Rockefeller Foundation. Panellists in the session were: Mr. Pichet Durongkaveroj, Minister of Science and Technology, Thailand; Ms. Bettina Quimson, eSociety, Department of Science and Technology, Philippines; Ms. Elenita Daño, Member, United Nations 10-Member Group to support the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and Asia Director, Action Group on Erosion, Technology and Concentration; Mr. Darlington Akaiso, Enterprise Risk and Solutions, International Finance Corporation; Ms. Tracy Farrell, Regional Director, Conservation International; and Mr. Akash Bhavsar, Managing Director, Skyquest Technology Group, and Chair, Innovation and Competitiveness Task Force, ESCAP Sustainable Business Network.

30. At the session, the Forum emphasized the importance of collaboration among stakeholders, recognizing that while a Government could act as an enabler, it must collaborate with different stakeholders, especially in the private sector, to encourage open and inclusive innovation and investment in research, development and innovation-related areas.

31. It was also stressed that users and local communities needed to be consulted and to build capacities, so that science, technology and innovation could be effectively used and accessible, especially to vulnerable groups. It was highlighted

that information and communications technology connectivity was essential to pursue sustainable growth in the Asia-Pacific region, which was home to some of the most innovative countries in the world but also to some of the most technologically deprived. Several panellists emphasized the importance of investment in education and human-resource development, which would develop the national and regional capacity for innovation. The Forum also suggested that the Sustainable Development Goals should be analysed and that efforts were needed to examine existing data and indicators and to combine and develop them further, so that development in science, technology and innovation could be effectively monitored and evaluated.

32. Several member States highlighted the need for collaborative efforts on science, technology and innovation to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and sustainable development in general. They also highlighted the role of ESCAP as a regional commission to act as a bridge between national and global endeavours, and urged ESCAP to assist member States to implement science, technology and innovation strategies that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda. Some member States underscored the important role of science, technology and innovation in increasing resilience to disasters and bridging the digital divide, particularly in vulnerable economies. Civil society emphasized that the regional and global science, technology and innovation mechanisms should be put in place to safeguard the basic human rights and inclusive development.

33. The Forum reaffirmed commitments made in the Sustainable Development Goals and emphasized that regional and international cooperation on sharing knowledge should be enhanced and synergies created on areas related to science, technology and innovation. The Forum recognized that North-South, South-South and triangular regional and international cooperation on science, technology and innovation, as well as on harnessing technology and innovation, is needed and that science, technology and innovation can reduce inequalities and help to reach vulnerable groups of people. The Forum urged ESCAP to assist member States in implementing strategies on science, technology and innovation that are aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

34. The need to adopt integrated and systematic approaches was emphasized. The Forum noted that ESCAP served the region as the suitable forum in which to engage cooperation on science, technology and innovation through the inaugural session of the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation in October 2016, and also acknowledged the work already in progress such as the Asia-Pacific information superhighway initiative. ESCAP should provide a platform for the sharing of best practices and lessons learned and for mechanisms to reflect the perspectives of the various stakeholders, especially the private sector and local communities. Some panellists also requested ESCAP to provide national, subregional and regional training and guidance on developing the capacity to cultivate innovations. It was suggested that the Committee on Information and Communications Technology, Science, Technology and Innovation should contribute to the discussions of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism and complement its work at the regional level.

35. Civil society organizations highlighted that science, technology and innovation are critical aspects of the means of implementation and thus should garner both domestic and international resources. Additionally, science, technology and

innovation efforts should address the issue of official development assistance and ensure fair rules of trade and adequate access to appropriate technology, while ensuring development policy space and coherence. They applauded the establishment of the Technology Facilitation Mechanism, which should primarily enable communities to share and benefit from technologies and innovative practices and ensure safeguards and free prior informed consent mechanisms for the use of traditional knowledge. It was emphasized that science and technology should be part of the global commons and must work for the benefit of the people rather than be an end in itself.

V. Session 5. Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable: regional priorities and opportunities

36. The session discussed the significance of building inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities in the region, noting the shifts needed. While highlighting concrete examples of how cities could take the lead in implementing global agendas, participants discussed key challenges, such as the preparedness of cities to focus and deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals, resource limitations, the need for data to support policy and track progress, and the importance of institutional coordination and alignment with national implementation policies. The session identified potential roles and priority areas for regional action in supporting local action in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

37. The session was moderated by the Executive Secretary of ESCAP. Panellists in the session were: Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, President of Seberang Perai Municipal Council (Malaysia); Mr. Yogeshwar Parajuli, Development Commissioner, Kathmandu Valley Development Authority (Nepal); Mr. Romano Reo, Mayor of Betio (Kiribati); Mr. Jeonghee Lee, Director General for International Urban Development Cooperation, Seoul Metropolitan Government (Republic of Korea); Mr. Bauyrzhan Baibek, Mayor of Almaty (Kazakhstan); Mr. Powes Parkop, Governor of Port Moresby and Member of Parliament (Papua New Guinea); Ms. Kalpana Srivastava, Commissioner and Managing Director, Directorate of Women Empowerment, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Bhopal (India).

38. The panel discussion highlighted how cities were seeking to translate global agreements into localized action, including strategic long-term planning. It was highlighted that effective citizen mobilization would be essential for the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Drawing from examples of successful citizen engagement in the areas of disaster risk reduction, climate change mitigation, adaptation and resilience, urban safety, health, transport, local economic development and environmental protection, speakers noted the need to relate the Sustainable Development Goals to the daily life of citizens. Community engagement, social inclusion — in particular of vulnerable and marginalized groups, including migrants — and gender-responsive and participatory budgeting were highlighted as particularly effective approaches for improving the quality of life in cities and realizing the promise to leave no one behind. Some speakers informed the Forum that they were giving particular attention to creating safe and violence-free cities and promoting health, in particular for women and youth. Speakers also

highlighted the role that new technologies could play in improving governance and citizen engagement at the local level, including through the use of e-governance tools and social media.

39. The Forum acknowledged the key role that cities would play in the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific region and the importance of engaging local governments and other stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, drawing from the experience of implementing local Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals. Participants noted the importance of aligning subnational plans and strategies with national implementation policies and strategies and promoting institutional coordination. The importance of enhancing data and the statistical capacities of member States at all levels was emphasized. The Forum called for the strengthening of regional cooperation towards building resilient cities. In that regard, the establishment of the Asian and Pacific Centre for Disaster Information Management was recognized as a good opportunity for regional cooperation and exchange.

40. Member States noted that the integration of the Sustainable Development Goals into national development plans should not be an end in itself, but that adequate support and coordination would be required at all levels. In particular, the special needs of vulnerable economies should be carefully considered and addressed. Capacity-building and strengthening of national agencies, at national and local levels, would be essential for effective operationalization and monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals. The importance of national consultations with various stakeholders, including with the private sector and civil society, in taking the development agenda forward was also noted.

41. United Nations organizations, funds and programmes highlighted the importance of harnessing urbanization for sustainable development in the region and called for attention to be given to a number of issues, including environmental sustainability, migration, climate change and disasters, and informed the Forum of various initiatives currently being undertaken. The importance of the local level in translating global commitments into action, including the Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, was noted.

42. Civil society organizations highlighted the need to safeguard public interest and ensure the rights of all to basic services, including housing, and to look at the urban poor, slum dwellers, migrants, informal sector and homeless people as contributors and partners in the development of cities. They called for those aspects to be prioritized in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the formulation of a new urban agenda, to be adopted at the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III). They expressed concern regarding the promotion of public-private partnerships at the expense of public interest and called for an end to forced evictions, demotions and displacements of informal communities. Representatives from local authorities highlighted the role of local governments in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the importance of forging partnerships among various levels of government and with other stakeholders. The new urban agenda should be anchored on the commitments of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other global agreements, to ensure effective implementation at the local level.

43. The Forum emphasized the need for ESCAP to support and strengthen regional efforts, networks and platforms for the effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the local level. Local governments, major groups and other stakeholders called for future Forums to include local governments and provide a platform for them to report on progress and share experiences, challenges and opportunities in implementing the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level.

VI. Session 6. Other matters

44. An associated event was held on voluntary national reviews with the objective of providing a status update on localization, planning and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals in the countries that had volunteered for national reviews in 2016. The event underlined that the follow-up and review process constituted an important part of the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda. During the panel discussion, representatives of China, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Samoa and Thailand presented plans in support of the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Delegates informed the Forum of the need for financial and technical assistance to improve statistical systems and for regional support to facilitate technology transfer, knowledge-sharing — in particular in mobilizing the private sector — and sustained cooperation to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, and recalled the importance of civil society in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

45. Another associated event was held to discuss and identify opportunities for regional cooperation to support member States in the implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 6 (Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all). The event was informed about the experiences of water management and sanitation practices in some countries of the region, including India, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan and other Central Asian countries, and the management of droughts and floods and poor water quality were identified as main challenges in the Asia-Pacific region. In that regard, the ESCAP Regional Cooperative Mechanism for Drought Monitoring and Early Warning was recognized as an important initiative. Participants welcomed ESCAP work on transboundary water cooperation through the use of technology such as Earth observation and satellite imagery as implementation tools for integrated water-resources management and drought and flood management. The event recommended regional cooperation for effective water management and sanitation practices. It emphasized the need for strengthened capacity of policymakers, institutional capacity-building and promotion of education and awareness creation at the grass-roots level about the importance of water conservation and sanitation practices.

46. A third associated event was organized on Sustainable Development Goal 10 (Reduce inequalities within and among countries). The discussions were informed by presentations of country experiences and civil society perspectives on addressing inequalities. Inequality was considered as a cross-cutting issue within the entire agenda of the Sustainable Development Goals. It was recognized that the causes and dimensions of inequalities varied according to context and had to be carefully studied, and that inequalities had to be addressed by their root causes. The discussions highlighted the importance of identifying vulnerable groups, including through the use of multiple and disaggregated data sources, such as surveys, to understand the real nature and causes of inequality and leave no one behind.